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AUTHOR Virtanen, Tuija
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses clause-initial adverbials of time functioning as signals of the temporal text strategy. A chain of such markers creates cohesion and coherence by forming continuity in the text and also signals textual boundaries that occur on different hierarchic levels. The temporal text strategy is closely associated with narrative text. Temporal adverbs in unitype text is discussed and their occurrence in a corpus containing heterogeneous texts of different types is described. It is obvious that the textual functions that a chain of clause-initial adverbials of time may have in creating cohesion and coherence and in segmenting the text have the discourse-pragmatic effect of facilitating text processing. Near-prototype narratives discussed at the beginning of the paper show clear and homogeneous tendencies. A less stereotyped narrative provides the text-receiver with less expected, and hence, informationally more weighty, solutions. (JP)

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Temporal adverbials in text structuring: on temporal text strategy*

TUIJA VIRTANEN

Abstract

The paper discusses clause-initial adverbials of time functioning as signals of the temporal text strategy. A chain of such markers creates cohesion in the text and contributes to text segmentation. The temporal text strategy is closely connected with the narrative type of text. First unitype texts are discussed. Then temporal adverbials are viewed in the light of quantitative data from a corpus containing heterogeneous texts of different types.

1. Temporal text strategy: Scrutiny of an example.

A discussion of adverbials of time in the service of the *temporal text strategy* (Enkvist 1987) may best be started from the narrative type of text. The temporal text strategy - or temporal *continuity*, *unity*, or *orientation*, to use terms originating in different frameworks (Givón 1983, 1984; Grimes 1975; Longacre 1983) - may appear in a text in an explicit form, or it may be left implicit if the text follows *experiential iconicity* (Enkvist 1981) - if the *text time* coincides with the *story-time* (cf. e.g. Genette 1972; Rimmon-Kenan 1983). In a temporally steered text, deviations from temporal sequentiality and temporal adjacency must be marked.

A temporal text strategy may run through the entire text or part of a text. It may combine and co-occur with other global and local strategies manifested in the text. On the textual surface, the temporal text strategy may be manifested through a chain of temporal expressions, typically adverbials denoting 'point-of-time' placed at the beginning of their clause and sentence - or rather, at the beginning of the textual unit they introduce. Their function is twofold: They create cohesion and coherence by forming continuity in the text and, at the same time, they play an important role in text segmentation by signalling textual boundaries that occur on different hierarchic levels. Consider the following example, an extract of a story written for children.

(1) --- *One evening* the woman found that there was a bit of milk left over after supper.
"I may as well give it to those skinny, scraggly, scrawny cats," she decided. She poured it into a pan and put it in the garden. That was on Monday.
On Tuesday, she ordered a whole extra quart of milk from the milkman. By mistake, of course.
Do you know what she did with it?
On Wednesday, she bought too much chopped meat at the butcher's shop - another mistake?

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On Thursday, she came upon an extra dozen eggs in her shopping bag. But they did not go to waste, for eggs are fine for cats.
On Friday, the mackerel in the market looked so firm and fresh that the woman completely forgot that they were having supper with friends that evening. She bought some mackerel and brought it home.
Then, of course, she couldn't throw it away - because she knew how cats feel about FISH.
"Now mind you," the woman warned the cats, "just because I give you food, you mustn't think I like having you here in our garden. I just happened to have bought this extra food by mistake."
The cats sat still and stared at her. Then they all CLOSED their big, round, yellow-green eyes.
On Sunday, it rained. --- (Rowand 1966:154-5)

Example (1) comes from the middle of a text which shows clear and homogeneous tendencies of the phenomena under investigation here. Typically for a narrative, the text manifests an interplay of several text-strategic continuities: In addition to the global temporal strategy we find participant continuity and action continuity. Initial placement of temporal adverbials at crucial points of the text has an important function in the signalling of new stages in the text, boundaries between textual units or *textual shifts.*[1] When no textual shift takes place, such adverbials tend to appear clause-finally, e.g. (2).

(2) He worked *all day*, hammering and sawing. He worked *almost all night*, too. (Rowand 1966:156)

Other types of adverbials normally appear non-initially in the narrative clauses in this kind of texts, cf. (1), above.

As adverbials of definite time in the example text have a crucial role in the signalling of the temporal text strategy, it is natural for the backgrounded descriptive or expository passages to be marked with the help of initially placed adverbials denoting 'duration' or 'frequency', e.g.

(3) *All day* the cats played in the pretty garden. They chased the beetles and the butterflies, and --- (Rowand 1966:153)

(4) *Every day* the cats played in the pretty garden. They would not go away. (Rowand 1966:154)

The example text also manifests the tendency - often found in narratives - of fewer markers appearing at lower-level shifts and clusters of markers occurring at the more macro-level boundaries (Givón 1984:245; cf. e.g. the adverbial marker *one evening* and the full-NP reference to one of the main participants *the woman* at the beginning of (1), a major boundary in the text; cf. also e.g. *on Tuesday* signalling the following minor shift, where the participant is referred to using a pronoun). Further, to reinforce

major textual boundaries, one often finds, instead of immediate shifts, different kinds of *prolonged shifts* (cf. e.g. the temporal circle of *one evening - that was on Monday* in (1) framing the first episode after the major boundary). An *anticipated shift* may also appear in the immediately preceding context of a major boundary, e.g. *just then* at the end of a section in (5) below (cf. also Giora 1983).[2]

> (5) --- Goldilocks looked at the teeny, weeny bed near the window. It was just the right height, and had a beautiful patchwork quilt just the right thickness. As soon as Goldilocks climbed in she fell fast asleep.
> *Just then* the bears came home, very hungry after their walk.
>
> 'Somebody's been eating my porridge!' roared the great big bear in a great gruff voice. --- (Boase 1983)

When there is no need to mark, for instance, deviation from temporal sequentiality or temporal adjacency using a lexically heavier temporal expression (such as *in the meantime*, *the day before*, or *two weeks later*), an implicit 'then' tends to be made explicit if it is needed to signal a textual shift. In (1), above, we find an interesting example of the occurrence of an explicit *then*, denoting 'after that'. The sequentiality of the events is clear even without the explicit adverbial marker. The adverbial has a very important textual function here: It marks a shift between two episodes in the narrative and stresses their sequentiality, and at the same time, it participates in the signalling of a change of pace and the growing tension (Longacre 1983) at this point in the story.

The peak of a story often seems to differ in structure from the rest of the text (Longacre 1983). An explicit temporal continuity may become totally implicit in the peak-episodes, which are then, instead, signalled by other devices, such as the use of sentence-initial direct speech to heighten the vividness of the narration, or shifts in participant/action continuity, connectors of different types, and so forth. The return of the explicit temporal text strategy in the post-peak episodes may then be relatively conspicuous. (For an extensive discussion of the above issues and detailed analyses of entire texts, see Virtanen 1988.)

Lack of space forbids a comparison here between temporal shifts and boundaries between textual segments as established, for instance, according to the Labovian or the Rumelhartian model (Labov 1977; Rumelhart 1975). In general, however, signals of macrostrategies seem to roughly correlate with narratological patterns as presented in several different types of models in the literature (see Virtanen 1988).

2. Text types.

Text types differ as to the typical text-strategic continuities used to structure them, and temporal sequentiality is one of the basic criteria for the narrative type of text (cf. e.g. Labov 1977; Longacre 1983; Werlich 1976). The temporal text strategy is, in fact, so closely associated with the narrative type of text that if text-producers wish to avoid the effect of this text type when they have to deal with temporally organizable materials, they seem to break the potential temporal sequentiality of the text (cf. Reinhart 1984). Examples of this abound in news stories. At the same time, it seems easy to realize various discourse functions in the form of a narrative, temporally structured, type of text - an argument for narrative being a basic or primary type of text: Consider, for instance, the use of narratives to instruct, explain things, or persuade.

Starting from the temporal text strategy we may outline a text-typological scale:[3]

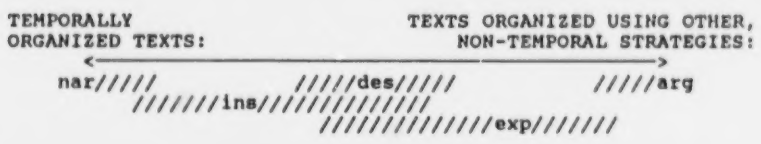

Figure 1. *The relative positions of five types of text on a scale of temporal vs. other text strategies (nar = narration; des = description; arg = argumentation; ins = instruction; exp = exposition).*

While narratives are always, implicitly or explicitly, temporally organized, argumentation, in the sense of certain culture-specific patterns of presenting rather openly evaluative discourse, may be structured with the help of various logical connectors, some of which indicate a temporally iconic, logical succession in discourse. A fundamental aspect of instructive, or procedural (Longacre 1983), texts is their strict conformity to experiential iconicity, which makes explicit markers of time, in their primary function, unnecessary. These texts vary, however, from more narrative-like texts that make use of temporal signals as explicit markers of shifts, to more description-like, or even exposition-like texts containing enumerative conjuncts instead (for the term, see Quirk et al. 1985:634). Expository texts, on the other hand, range from "expository narratives" to blends of exposition and argumentation. In between, we may find the most "neutral" category on the scale: description. Since description often follows what may be called *generic* time, it may, if embedded into another type of text, relatively easily be adjusted to match the time orientation of its

frame text if necessary. Descriptions vary from "suggestive", typically found in multitype narratives, to more expository ones.

3. Quantitative data.

I have shown examples of fairly stereotyped texts, structured along temporal lines, which have been chosen for the purpose of illustration. They were selected as representative samples of their categories from materials collected with a view to an in-depth analysis of the interplay of various textual and discoursal motivations behind the placement of temporal and locative adverbials in their clause (Virtanen 1988). Obviously, as these data were expected to show maximal tendencies, they do not lend themselves to statistical treatment. Let us, therefore, consider the occurrence of temporal adverbials in the service of the temporal text strategy in a corpus that contains heterogeneous texts of different types.

For this purpose, a study of a few, randomly sampled adverbials of the type frequently found in the unitype texts of my own data, referred to above, was carried out at the *Survey of English Usage*, University College London (henceforth: SEU). I used the written corpus, which in January 1990 contained 84 "texts" of approximately 5,000 running words each, totalling some 420,000 words.

The search procedure of the written corpus at the SEU gave 1,790 adverbial tokens denoting 'point-of-time' for the 33 selected lexical items (e.g. *Monday* gave adverbials such as *on Monday, by Monday, since last Monday*). Of these, one third (600 or 34%) appeared in a clause-initial or sentence-initial position. The majority of them (357 or 60%) appeared at the beginning of a text, mostly in journals, letters, and newspapers, thus forming a temporal setting (often combined with a spatial one) for what follows. In journals, such items usually constitute the temporal chain that, on a macro-level, structures the text. Cf. e.g.

(6) PORT STANLEY, Falkland Isles, *Monday*.
(W.12.4:277)4

(7) *Friday 22nd Feb.*
Dear J,
Just a note to say --- (W.7.5:168-9)

(8) *16th Good Friday*
Went to Mattins, Litany service but D + M went to part of the 3-hour. In the afternoon I tidied --- *17th* (W.8.2:367-9)

The following discussion concerns the remaining 243 initially placed temporal tokens, which form 14% of the 1,790 adverbial tokens and 40% of the initially placed temporal tokens. Initial position here refers to placement before the subject.

The typical initial position proved to be at the beginning of a sentence - 136 or 56% of the instances (N=243) appeared in this position (cf. (9), below), and another 63 or 26% sentence- and paragraph-initially, e.g. (10).5 These cover 82% of the instances - a figure to be contrasted with the 44 clause-initial tokens (18% of the initially placed temporal tokens), e.g. (11).

> (9) Mr. Name has been teaching at this Secondary Modern School of 222 pupils in a temporary capacity for almost 22 months. *Until July* he coached examination groups for us for two days a week. *Since September* he has taken over the timetable of the Head of English who has been recovering from a serious operation. Mr. Name has settled well ---
>
> (W.17.2:108-11)

> (10) --- He had a sensation of danger now.
> *By the end of September* he had heard a good deal more about his brother. He had heard that --- (W.16.7:95-7)

> (11) I first saw her on the 22nd March when she gave a history of four months pain in both calves. Initially more or less complete rest had tended to resolve the problem but *in January* it became quite agonising and in fact she was seen in Casualty as her general practitioner thought she might have ---
>
> (W.7.13:419-20)

The typical text category containing initially placed temporal adverbials was that of letters (Text Cat. 7 and 17) - in particular of the social and intimate kind (7.1-5, 7.31-32). Such letters often concern various incidents that have taken place in the life of the text-producer, and not infrequently, they are realized in the form of a narrative. Some letters - written, for instance, while one is travelling - may have a global temporal strategy, into the frame of which descriptions, evaluations, and other more locally appearing text types are inserted. Letters of application (7.7-8) were a category of business letters (7.6-17, 17.1-2) that often contained an embedded temporal strategy in the part giving the applicant's background, previous employments, etc.

Expectedly, extracts of non-printed journals (Text Cat. 8) also included a high number of sample items. A third major group of texts in which initial temporals tended to appear was that of prose fiction (Text Cat. 16) - not an unexpected finding, either. Cf. Table 1.[6]

Table 1. *Text category distribution of 243 initially-placed temporal sample adverbial tokens in the written corpus of the SEU. (For the coding, please see Table 2 on the next page.)*

Text category	N	%	No instances
6.4-5	6	2 %	6.1-3; 6.6
7.1-5	31	20 %	
7.31-32	17 (48)		
7.6-9	20		7.10-12
7.13	1		7.14
7.15	3		7.16-17
17.1-2	4 (28) (76)	12 % (32 %)	
8.1-3	46	19 %	
9.5-7;9.9;9.11	8	3 %	9.1-4 9.8; 9.10
10.1	1	-	10.2-6
11.1-8	13	5 %	
12.1-3	18	8 %	12.4
12.7	1 (19)		
12.5-6	6		
12.8	1 (26)	11 %	
13.1-5	13	5 %	14.1-3
15.1-5	13	5 %	
16.1-8	41	17 %	
59 texts (= 70 % of texts)	243 adverbials	99 %	25 texts (= 30 % of t.)

As the text categories contained in the written corpus are of different sizes, it is of interest to compare these proportions with the findings reported above (cf. Table 2). Letters of various kinds form 25% of the written corpus, while only 4% of the corpus consists of texts from journals. Prose fiction, again, covers some 9% - a fairly average kind of amount. One third of the letter category is of the social, intimate kind. Above the average of 2.9 initial temporals per 5,000 words, i.e. a "text", were thus journals (15.3 items per 5,000 words), followed by social letters (6.9), prose fiction (5.1), and press (3.3).

Table 2. *List of Written Texts included in the SEU.*

Text Number:	Category:	Proportion of the corpus:	
NON-PRINTED MATERIAL			
W. 6.1-6	Continuous writing		7%
W. 7.1-5	Letters - social, intimate		
31-32	Letters - social, intimate	8%	
6-15	Letters - business		
16	Letters - printed/mimeoed		25%
17	Letters - pre-publication	17%	
W. 17.1-2	Letters - business		
W. 8.1-3	Journals		4%
PRINTED MATERIAL			
W. 9.1-4	Learned arts		13%
5-11	Learned sciences		
W. 10.1-6	Instructional writing		7%
W. 11.1-8	General non-fiction		9%
W. 12.1-4	Press - general news		
5-6	Press - specific news		9%
7	Local press - general news		
8	Press - editorials		
W. 13.1-5	Administrative and official language		6%
W. 14.1-3	Legal and statutory language		4%
W. 15.1-5	Persuasive writing		6%
W. 16.1-8	Prose fiction		9%
	TOTAL		99%

Note. Figures have been rounded off.

The main motivation behind the initial placement of the adverbials under investigation seemed to be text-strategic. Thus, 68% (166) of the 243 initially placed tokens functioned in the service of the temporal text strategy, of which we have seen examples above. These text-strategic chains of temporal expressions were mostly of the local, embedded kind. 17% (42) formed an occasional anaphoric link to the immediately preceding textual context but did not belong to a chain of text-strategic elements, e.g.

> (12) --- What the Advent message does is to surround each one of these moments with all the seriousness of the Last Day, to remind us that *at the end of the day* the Son of Man will acknowledge or disown us by our answer to Jesus --- (W.15.2:67)

Some such local links may, of course, be interpreted as signals of micro-level text strategies if there is a temporal juncture, cf. Labov's (1977) definition of a minimal narrative. The remaining 14% (35) appeared initially for other reasons, of which the main one was that of signalling a topic shift, typically in social letters, e.g.

(13) --- The Girls aren't speaking to Nicky now. *This morning* I woke at -7- 6 & it was sunny but now there is rain. Oh yes I went to quite a good party on Friday - it was the last (but one) night of --- (W.7.31:267-9)

Such instances imply the existence of an otherwise implicit temporal frame or strategy: Basically, the difference between topic shifts signalled through a temporal element and markers of a temporal text strategy is only the scope of the strategy - usually there is only one instance of an explicit temporal signal in a text that may otherwise be realized using other strategies. Depending on text-typological clues, the reader, of course, may or may not expect a chain of text-strategic markers when the first adverbial appears in a temporally organizable text. Temporal signals of topic shifts differ from the local links referred to above in that the marker is not anaphoric. Clearly, all of these are related to each other.

Temporal signals of topic shifts tended to occur at the beginning of a paragraph, while markers of a temporal text strategy typically appeared at the beginning of a sentence that occurred non-initially in a paragraph. Paragraph-initial position was, however, often favoured in the instance of markers of a global strategy. Especially in the social letters, paragraph division was sometimes non-existent (cf. e.g. (13) above). Markers of local links behaved differently from the other shift markers: Nearly half of them were found at the beginning of a clause, referring back to the preceding clause within the same sentence.

An investigation of the distribution of the textual motivations discussed above in the different text categories shows that chains of temporal expressions indicating a temporal text strategy were mainly found in journals (24% of the 166 tokens), prose fiction (20%), and letters (33% - 19% in social and 14% in business letters). As the text categories are of different sizes, the number of strategy markers per "text", i.e. 5,000 words, is again of interest. Journals thus contained 13.3 initially placed adverbial signals of a temporal text strategy per "text", social letters 4.4, and prose fiction 4.3 - all well above the average of 2. Extracts of journals, social and business letters (in particular, letters of application and referees' letters), news texts and a number of other text categories contained local temporal strategies, while the global type tended to be found in prose fiction, a few social letters and some journal texts. As pointed out above, social letters were the typical source of the topic-shift sort of temporal signal. Local links of the temporal kind were found in a number of different text categories - they showed no specific pattern.

Fig. 2 below includes only the individual "texts" containing the highest number of markers of a temporal text strategy in each text category. The rest of the journal texts are situated on both sides of the middle of the scale, other letters and prose fiction texts, again, in the lower half.

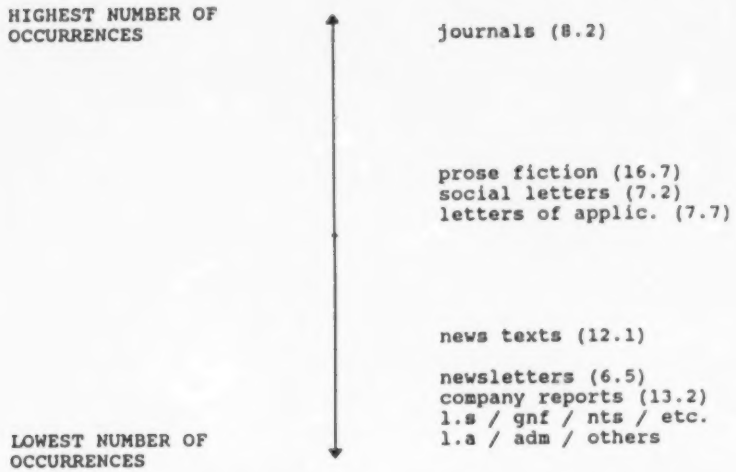

Figure 2. *Initially-placed temporal sample adverbial tokens signalling a global or local temporal text strategy (N=166): Individual "texts" containing the highest number of occurrences in their category.* (l.s = learned sciences, gnf = general non-fiction, nts = notices, l.a = learned arts, adm = administrative language). Text number in parentheses.

To conclude the report on the corpus study, a few remarks on the behaviour of *then* denoting 'after that' will be in order. This item was checked separately, as it was expected to behave somewhat differently from the others. Of the 209 instances of initially placed *then*'s, 135 or 65% occurred clause-initially and referred back to the preceding clause within the same sentence (cf. the corresponding figure for the other initially placed temporals (N=243): 18%).7 Thus, *then* 'after that' tends to have the function of an occasional local link within a sentence, or that of signalling a micro-level temporal strategy. In distribution, it seemed to be fairly similar to the adverbials discussed above. In addition to the text categories of social letters, journals and prose fiction, it was, however, also frequently found in instructions (often in local chains of the type 'first do this and then do that').

4. Conclusion

As I have presented quantified data on textual phenomena, let me conclude the paper by repeating the obvious: Mere frequencies - of different types of adverbials in different positions in different types of texts - are not enough to give us the whole picture of the phenomenon. We need to take into account the entire text, the type of

the text (within multitype texts, the frame or main type vs. the embedded subtypes; cf. Virtanen 1987; Virtanen and Wårvik 1987), the total strategy of the text and its discourse functions. The textual functions that a chain of clause-initial adverbials of time may have in creating cohesion and coherence and in segmenting the text obviously have the discourse-pragmatic effect of facilitating text processing. Near-prototype narratives discussed at the beginning of the paper show clear and homogeneous tendencies. A less stereotype narrative provides the text-receiver with less expected, and hence, informationally more weighty, solutions (cf. e.g. Björklund and Virtanen, forthcoming). The structuring of such a "deviant" text may, however, be assumed to take place against the background of a (socio-cultural) prototype narrative, which makes the investigation of simple unitype texts worth while. To round off, I may, therefore, agree with Butt and O'Toole - two literary scholars working within the systemic framework - who state that "we should clearly start --- by looking at the unmarked form of the structure potential of a particular genre" (Butt and O'Toole 1985:97).

NOTES

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1. A terminological note. The chain of references to a common temporal frame used to structure a text forms continuity in the text. It is thus the text that is continuous, not necessarily the referential frame. Intra-continuity steps, i.e. new stages in the text-strategic continuity - in this case, new points on the temporal line that the linguistic signals refer to - may therefore be called *shifts* in text-strategic continuity. They reflect the other side of the coin - that of the temporal markers acting as a clue to text segmentation. Shifts - and breaks, in the sense of switching strategies - in text-strategic continuities are textual phenomena.
2. The terms *episode* and *section* are here used as in Virtanen 1988, where these example texts are fully analysed.
3. In outlining the scale, I have used Werlich's (1976) five types of text. The scale reflects the role of the temporal text strategy - explicit or implicit - in text typology. It does not, as such, account for other textual phenomena.
4. The notation *W.12.4:277* stands for 'Sentence 277 in Text 4 in Text Category 12 in the Written Corpus of the SEU'.
5. Typographical text segmentation (e.g. paragraph division) need not coincide with thematic text segmentation (i.e.boundaries between textual units of various kinds).
6. The individual "texts" containing the highest numbers of the items under investigation were: 1) 8.2 (21 tokens); 2) 7.2/8.3/16.7 (16 tokens each); 3) 7.31 (13 tokens); 4) 7.7 (12 tokens); and 5) 8.1 (9 tokens).
7. 66 (31%) of the 209 instances appeared sentence-initially within a paragraph and 8 (4%) paragraph-initially.

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Tuija Virtanen is a Ph.D. candidate and researcher at Åbo Akademi, Finland. She is currently working on discourse functions of adverbial placement in English. She has presented papers on text and discourse linguistics at international conferences and published articles in conference volumes (e.g. in the *Stockholm Studies in English* series).